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THE TREND OF RECENT CRITICAL THEORY

Aristotle fired the first gun in the Battle of the Critics, and ever since his time the battle has been fiercely raging. Reverberations of past cannonading still mingle with the fusillade of modern musketry. It would be depressing, however, and false, to imagine, simply because the fighting was not over, that there have been no decisive gains, that no frontiers have been established, that humanity is as much confused as ever concerning the marks which distinguish good art from bad, that inherent excellence has no chance of recognition. The old theory which held that art to be commendable must be an imitation of nature, or an imitation of Greek and Latin classics, is no longer in good repute. Fine art, to-day, is recognized as an expression of some sort, not an imitation; a transcribing by the artist, as Pater puts it, "not of fact, but of his sense of fact"; and the excellence of such art is no longer gauged by its slavish adherence to rules laid down by ardent admirers of the past, but by the inherent laws of its own being. Agreement on these points does not signify that the critics have struck a truce,—as we have said, the battle still rages,—but one need not despair of human intelligence when such essentials as these are fairly well agreed upon. Critical theorists, to be sure, are often obsessed by an idea which they push to extremes, but their extremist theories are usually balanced by their critical practice, where the task of estimating the merits of a specific work of art exercises a steadying influence not felt in the ungoverned activity of the speculative process. The turn which the Battle of the Critics has taken in our day resolves itself into a conflict between impressionists and æstheticians, and between both

these groups of critics on the one side, and the judicial critics on the other. Their conflict is over the qualities which produce æsthetic pleasure, and over the importance of these qualities in the total value of a work of art. The different points of view of most of the contemporary critics whose opinions bear weight are represented in the works of the authors discussed in this paper. Mr. W. C. Brownell and Professor G. E. Woodberry are most nearly in accord with the position taken by Pater in his essay on *Style*, while Mr. A. J. Balfour stands at the farthest remove from that position. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Spingarn, indeed, though in the spirit that animates them as divergent as tolerance and contempt, are both opposed to moral judgments and may be taken as representatives of the critics who would destroy all those distinctions gradually created by the slow process of critical thinking.

Mr. Brownell's recent book *Standards* is a companion volume to his earlier *Criticism*, published in 1914. The ideas in both these books are so sound, the analysis of existing conditions so acute, the occasional dash of satire so highly spiced, that one cannot but regret the presence of certain stylistic elements more calculated to repel than to attract readers. The central idea in the earlier work is that it is the concern of criticism to measure the artist's success "by the correspondence of his expression to the idea it suggests *and by the value of the idea itself*" (*Criticism*, p. 17). The first half of this definition embraces all that Spingarn and more than Balfour would include under the critic's function. The reason for Mr. Brownell's insistence upon the value of the idea itself becomes apparent in *Standards*. The idea is important because, as the author says, "art is an expression of life" (*Standards*, p. 117). Hence the value of the idea depends upon the artist's knowledge of life. The chief trouble with the modern artist is that he does not know enough, and that he is not likely to increase his knowledge so long as the public remains in its present state of satisfied ignorance. Brownell is caustic, almost bitter, in picturing our decadent world gone mad with a love of novelty, by its passion for self-assertion blinded to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic, hostile not only to present standards but to all standards

as such, incapable of self-restraint, proud of its inferiority, and totally unconscious of an inner life. Such a state of affairs he considers full of dangers for literature, because literature not only creates a demand but is itself the product of a demand. As the demands of such a public as this will impose no restraints on the artist, but rather cause him to avoid all restraint, Brownell calls on the "saving remnant" to rear its standards and cling to them rigorously, lest the increasing appetite for the superficial render art itself worthless.

One may agree with Mr. Brownell in his idea of the function of criticism without agreeing with him in his notion of its importance. Mr. Balfour, however, would disagree with him most decidedly in both respects. His lecture entitled *Criticism and Beauty* was delivered several years ago (1909), but if it had been delivered yesterday it could not have been more pertinent. He seems almost to have had Mr. Brownell in mind when he wrote: "In their fear that if art is valued simply by the pleasure it gives and no objective standard be established, individualism will run rampant and art decay, many good people attach other functions to art, such as morality. The artist is a seer, a moralist, a prophet. He must intuitively penetrate the realities which lie behind this world of shows. At the lowest he must supply a criticism of life. Obiter dicta based on the view that good art is always something more than art, that it not only creates beauty, but symbolically teaches philosophy, religion, ethics, even science, are constantly to be found in the purple passages of enthusiastic commentators on poetry, music, and painting" (p. 37).

But Mr. Balfour can find "no justification in experience for associating good art with penetrating insight, or good art with good morals. Optimism and pessimism; theism, pantheism, atheism; morality and immorality; religion and irreligion; lofty resignation and passionate revolt—each and all have inspired or helped to inspire the creators of artistic beauty. . . . while it is certain that cheap cynicism and petty spite have supplied the substance of literary achievements which we could ill afford to lose" (pp. 37-38).

The points of view of Balfour and Brownell are as removed

from each other as the poles. From Brownell's point of view it is "less the pleasure that a work of art produces than the worth of the work itself" that is to guide the critic, and its worth is measured not only by beauty but by the elements present of truth and goodness, by the largeness and saneness of the artist's view of life. Balfour, on the contrary, believes that the artist's function is to create beauty and nothing more, and that the critic has done his duty when he has pointed out what to him are the sources of æsthetic pleasure in the work of art. But the critic engages in an activity irrelevant to his profession and irrational when in addition to pointing out beauties he theorizes about them and sets himself up as a judge of what is æsthetically beautiful and what is not. For the degree of excellence of a work of art is measured by the æsthetic pleasure which it gives, and, as this pleasure varies with the individual, there can be no objective standards for measuring artistic excellence. He would admit that if there were "a general agreement about things that are beautiful, only philosophers would disquiet themselves in order to discern in what precisely that beauty consisted." But he finds that "notoriously there is no such agreement," and bids us consider "Wordsworth on the eighteenth century, Boileau on the sixteenth, Voltaire on Shakespeare, the French Romantics on the French Classics, the Renaissance on the Middle Ages." The agreement among experts, manifested in their lists of great books, he considers of little importance, because the number of those professing a common taste is much exaggerated, and because this agreement "even where in some measure it may be truly said to exist," does not go deep enough to amount to anything. The critics who would agree in their lists of great artists would not agree as to the order of their excellence, nor would they feel alike in the presence of a masterpiece. Their appreciation of technique—by which he does not mean that style which Pater identifies with good art—is their only common bond; where they feel intensely, their evaluations become personal and dissentient.

I have dwelt thus long upon Balfour's treatment of criticism, because it constitutes the most forceful attack upon objective standards that I have read, and because, if we must do away

with objective standards as well as with intellect and morality in art, the talk about good and bad taste is absurd. Yet this we are loath to admit. It seems like a reflection on our common sense to say that the *Iliad* or *King Lear* is no better art than the tale of adventure which enthralls a boy, or the "best-seller" which fascinates thousands of mature men and women. And remembering that the most skilfully woven arguments have often proved specious, we are inclined to believe that Mr. Balfour's reasoning, rather than the common sense of generations of critics, is defective. Our first impulse is to deny, as Mr. Brownell does, the premise itself that art is to be valued only by the pleasure it gives. But ignoring this premise for the moment, may we not discriminate between kinds of pleasure and demonstrate that one kind, at least, is measurable objectively? Quite aside from the question of the value of beauty, is there such a thing as beauty *per se*, or is beauty only a name for mixed feelings of a pleasurable sort?

Although Balfour, according to Spingarn, is indebted to Benedetto Croce for most of his ideas, he has ignored a distinction made by Croce on the subject of æsthetic pleasure, which is at least worthy of consideration. Croce distinguishes between pure æsthetics, hedonistic æsthetics, and the æsthetic of the sympathetic. Pure æsthetics is the science of the pleasurable of expression alone, that delight which comes from recognizing the adequacy of the expression to the thing expressed. The pleasure derived from finding exactly the right word to express an idea is an example of pure æsthetic pleasure. The pleasure which an artist feels "during the moment in which he sees (or has the intuition of) his work for the first time" is purely æsthetic. But "Æsthetic hedonism," writes Croce, "looks upon the æsthetic as a simple fact of feeling, and confounds the pleasurable of expression, which is the beautiful, with the pleasurable of all sorts. . . . Another less vulgar current of thought considers æsthetic to be the science of the sympathetic, of that with which we sympathize, which attracts, rejoices, gives us pleasure and excites admiration. But the sympathetic is nothing but the image or representation of what pleases. And as such it is a complex fact, resulting from a constant element,

the æsthetic element of representation, and from a variable element, the pleasing in its infinite forms, arising from all the various classes of values.

"In ordinary language there is sometimes a feeling of repugnance at calling an expression beautiful, which is not an expression of the sympathetic. Hence the continual contrast between the point of view of the æsthetician or of the art critic and that of the ordinary person, who cannot succeed in persuading himself that the image of pain and of turpitude can be beautiful, or at least, can be beautiful with as much right as the pleasing and the good" (*Æsthetic*, tr. Douglas Ainslee, p. 137). "The doctrine of the sympathetic has introduced and rendered familiar in systems of æsthetic a series of concepts," such as "tragic, comic, sublime, pathetic, moving, sad, ridiculous, melancholy, tragi-comic, humoristic, majestic, dignified, serious, grave, imposing, noble, decorous, graceful, attractive, piquant, coquettish, idyllic, elegiac, cheerful, violent, ingenuous, cruel, base, horrible, disgusting, dreadful, nauseating; the list can be increased at will" (p. 142). But these concepts, Croce says, and the psychologists would agree with him, are merely "classes, which can be bent in the most various ways and multiplied at pleasure, to which it is sought to reduce the infinite complications and shadings of the values and disvalues of life." They cannot be defined. They belong not to æsthetic but to psychology.

Now Mr. Balfour is in perfect accord with Croce in his belief that these concepts are not measurable objectively, that what is attractive to one person may be repellent to another. But he has nowhere shown that he recognizes the distinction between the æsthetic of the sympathetic and the beautiful of expression alone. His view is almost identical with that of æsthetic hedonism which "looks upon the æsthetic as a simple fact of feeling, and confounds the pleasurable of expression with the pleasurable of all sorts." Of course pleasure arising from a variable element is not measurable by any fixed standard, but the pleasurable of expression is. And the measure to be used is suggested by Balfour himself. It is knowledge. Balfour admits that technique is measurable objectively by the critic's knowl-

edge of the difficulties to be overcome. Similarly adequacy of expression, which is only another name for beauty, is measured by the critic's knowledge of what the artist is trying to express. If, in Croce's words, we ask before a work of art "if it be expressive and what it expresses, whether it speak or stammer, or be silent altogether" (p. 61), we are applying an objective test just as certainly as a judge who, with the evidence before him, asks whether the parties concerned have fulfilled or violated a contract. We may reach different conclusions, just as judges may, and do, but as Balfour himself concedes, in speaking of technique, "the scale is not the less objective because it may often be uncertain in application" (p. 17).

To illustrate the difference between the pleasurable of expression and the pleasurable of the sympathetic I had thought of selecting a realistic passage from Crabbe's *Village*, such a passage as that portraying the hideous misery of the village poor house. No normal person could derive any pleasure from contemplating the appalling heartlessness, degradation, and squalor depicted: though critics innumerable have admired Crabbe's power of expression. But the contemplation of such misery might arouse pity, and as pity is classed as a sympathetic emotion, I fear the passage would not serve my purpose. Let me present, instead, an image which has nothing about it with which we can sympathize. What could be more gruesome than Spenser's description of the foul monster in the den of *Error*?—

Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,
 But th' other half did woman's shape retaine,
 Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.

 Of her there bred
 A thousand young ones, which she dayly fed,
 Sucking upon her poisonous dugs, each one
 Of sundry shapes, yet all ill-favorèd:
 Soon as that uncouth light upon them shone,
 Into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone.

No one has ever seen such a monster, and yet it is easily visualized. No one can have any pleasant associations aroused by the details enumerated, and yet the perfection of the expression of the ugly is in itself beautiful.

Or take the picture by Teniers, of sots quarreling over their dice, which Ruskin denounces as base, because "it is an expression of delight in the prolonged contemplation of a vile thing." In this picture the surroundings are unattractive, the characters are repellent, their occupation low. Our sympathies are not touched. Yet it does produce pleasure of the purely æsthetic kind, pleasure resulting from the observer's recognition of the truthfulness of the artist's transcription of his feelings about the facts before him. Ruskin, who condemns the picture on moral grounds, admits that "nothing in its kind has ever been done equal to it." His words are not the result of sympathetic admiration, but of knowledge. Not knowledge that comes through any one definite channel, but knowledge that many people may have in common just the same; knowledge of life and knowledge of the significance of details; the sort of knowledge that enables us to say confidently that a character in a book is true to life, though we never actually knew any personality like it in real life. To be sure, as Woodberry says, it is not a "facile task to re-create the work as it was in the mind of the artist. It is not so simple as observing a sunset; it is not merely to open your eyes and see; you must first create the eye to see with" (*Two Phases of Criticism*, p. 14). But if the critic with the seeing eye points out the significance of the details in revealing the artist's meaning, then those persons whose souls have developed enough through experience and contemplation will recognize the truth in the representation. In every generation the beauties of the artistic creations of the past have been apparent to men of trained insight. They may have given slightly different interpretations to the artist's meaning, reading their own personalities into it to a certain extent, but still the nucleus of truth, the fundamental similarity between expression and idea, has been there, else there had been no common point from which they could diverge. Year after year, also, readers who have failed to appreciate these works, come to appreciate them. It is not as though the world were divided into those absolutely incapable of appreciation and those capable. On the contrary, the incapable are constantly merging into the capable. The works which they enjoyed in their immaturity pass to the

rubbish heap; the works which possess the qualities of durable art they come to enjoy. Great art is that to which men grow up but which they do not outgrow.

Although personally I do not believe that the quality of perfect expression is sufficient alone to put a work of art in the highest class, I do believe that every work of art prized by æstheticians possesses this quality, that it is the common basis for their agreement, no matter how much they may vary in total emotional response, and that without this element no work of art meets with the approval of a man of trained taste. The pure æsthetician would not rank works of art by the sympathetic pleasure they produce in him, as Balfour would, nor by their moral worth, as would Brownell, but by the nearness of their approach to perfection of expression. And all perfect expressions, whether sonnets, odes, or epics, he would place in the same class.

It is Croce's dictum, not that art is expression, but that all expression is art, that Spingarn has seized upon with such eagerness (J. E. Spingarn, *Creative Criticism*, Henry Holt and Company). With a total disregard for reasoning and with an astonishing confidence in the power of mere assertion, he seeks to sweep aside the distinctions created by generations of thinkers.

"We have done with all the old rules," he exclaims. "We have done with the *genres*, or literary kinds. . . . We have done with the comic, the tragic, the sublime, and an army of vague abstractions of their kind. . . . We have done with the theory of style, with metaphor, simile, and all the paraphernalia of Graeco-Roman rhetoric. . . . We have done with all moral judgment of literature. . . . We have done with the confusion between the drama and the theatre. . . . We have done with technique as separate from art. . . . We have done with the race, the time, the environment of a poet's work as an element in Criticism. . . . Finally we have done with the old rupture between genius and taste. When Criticism first propounded as its real concern the oft-repeated question: 'What has the poet tried to express and how has he expressed it?' Criticism prescribed for itself the only possible method. How can the critic answer this question without becoming at one with the creator? The identity of genius and taste is the final achieve-

ment of modern thought on the subject of art" (J. E. Spingarn, *Creative Criticism*, p. 24 ff.).

Mr. Spingarn is a bit hasty in reporting the success of the new criticism. He numbers the fatalities in the ranks he is attacking by the number of bombs he explodes, without troubling himself to examine actual results. Could we share his confidence we should now be speaking of conservative criticism in the past tense. In truth, however, many of those elements of art with which the older criticism has concerned itself persist in asserting themselves in spite of Mr. Spingarn's denial of their existence. We have hitherto confined ourselves to the pleasure-giving qualities of art in order to show that even if we evaluated art by its beauty alone there was some ground for belief in an objective standard. But such restraint did not spring from lack of belief in intellectual values. It is the plain intention of the new criticism, however, in identifying art and expression, to set aside as unimportant all intellectual and moral elements. Accept the principle "All expression is art," says Mr. Spingarn, and we have no further use for moral judgments. They are all so much old lumber.

Now this statement appears to have a shade of truth in it if, in accepting the principle, we attach to the word *expression* the same meaning that Croce attaches to it. But Mr. Spingarn, I cannot help feeling, is somewhat disingenuous in not explaining to his readers that he uses the term in a philosophical, not in its popular sense. What does the average reader understand by the term "expression" when applied to a work of art? Professor Woodberry has answered the question for us: "It is the process of externalizing what was in the artist's mind, in some object of sense which shall convey it to others." That is, when we speak of an expression, we mean the painted picture, the moulded form, the written poem; in brief, the observable result of the artist's activity. But this is not what Croce means when he says that all expression is art. Croce means by expression the spiritual activity, the æsthetic vision of the artist, the synthesis of sensations and impressions existing in the artist's mind but not yet externalized. Space does not here permit of an attempt to unravel the intricacies of Croce's theory, but in so much as

the critic cannot possibly come at the intuition in the mind of the artist except through the externalized expression, the distinction between the two kinds of expression would seem of little practical value for criticism.

Restricting ourselves, therefore, to Woodberry's definition, let us examine Spingarn's contention that expression has nothing to do with mind or morals. Is it entirely sensual simply because it is concrete? It is conceded, as Woodberry says in attacking the new criticism, "that the contents of the work of art, its meaning, is constituted of the artist's personality expressed therein. What a lean and diminished personality that would be from which intellectual and moral elements were excluded! The difficulty seems to lie in finding a passage for intellectual and moral elements into that phenomenal and highly concrete world in which alone art is expressed. Can the gap between the abstract world of reason and the concrete world of sense be bridged?" (*Two Phases of Criticism*, pp. 21, 22). Mr. Woodberry's conclusion is that it is bridged "in art precisely as in the normal exercise of our faculties in the routine of ordinary life."

The material upon which the artist draws, he grants, consists only of perceptions stored in memory. But before reproducing this material in concrete form the artist reshapes it. In so doing he is bringing reason to bear upon his perceptions. The result of this activity of his reason is a new world, the world of art in which the concrete expressions are new phenomena, but phenomena still, just as in the everyday world. As in the world about us we must depend upon our reason in dealing with phenomena, so must we depend upon our reason in dealing with the new phenomena.

The most obvious example of an art form, the intellectual content of which is evident, is satire. Satire, indeed, is based almost entirely on intellectual and moral judgments. Take, for instance, a novel which reveals the flashy, empty life of those social circles known as the "smart set." Even though the author took his language and every action from the very life he was portraying, the fact that his book represented such life as frothy and unsubstantial would demonstrate that he had used his

reason both in observing the social phenomena of real life and in selecting from among his observations those calculated to convey most effectively his final impression. The critic, in turn, exercises his reason on the satiric novel as a new phenomenon, to be compared with the social phenomena with which he is already familiar.

The same process, but with different results, goes on in the mind of an artist whose book turns out not to be a satire. A book which reflected such life as being itself interesting, exciting, and desirable, the end, so to speak, of all social effort, would reveal the mental processes of the author quite as certainly as the satire did.

How arbitrary to say that the artist should seek to convey only a sensuous meaning! How false to say that this is all he does convey! Consider once more Spenser's description of Error. Taken by itself the image of the foul serpent, no matter how vivid, would not be valued highly. Spenser had a message to convey in this imaginative concrete representation of the loathsome, namely, that errors, lies, and scandal are vile and debasing, while truth is lovely and elevating. That is, the artist's meaning is not simply to present an image of the loathsome, but to attach an idea to that image, to write an allegory, in short. Or consider *King Lear*, which happens to be mentioned by Spingarn. Spingarn says we should only ask what the poet's meaning is. Well, suppose we ask this question. One answer, many times given, is that the poet meant to convey the impression that there is no estimating the terrible consequences of a failure to control the passions. Is there no mind in such a meaning? no moral attitude? At another point Spingarn says that "The poet's only moral duty is to express his vision of reality as well as he can" (p. 33), and that "Every poet re-expresses the universe in his own way." To this he adds, "The tragic does not exist for Criticism, but only Æschylus, Calderon, Shakespeare, and Racine." Could more be asked or granted? Spingarn is hoist by his own petard. Reality, a universe, Æschylus, Calderon, Shakespeare, and Racine without intellectual and moral relations are inconceivable.

There are poems, doubtless, which tell us nothing of "how to live," which are neither moral nor immoral, but which are

perfect expressions of the artist's perceptions. Such works are unmoral because the perceptions have no moral qualities. They are regarded as beautiful because of perfect expression, and because of the associations they arouse. Arnold puts the poems of Keats in this class. The *Ode to a Nightingale* is the perfect expression of a mood and is valued by an æsthetician as such. It gives more pleasure to some than to others because the images are richer in associative value to some than to others, and the mood more sympathetic. But no one would claim to derive from it any great intellectual stimulus or any moral stamina. On the other hand, no one with any sense of values would call it immoral. It is beautiful, nothing less, but nothing more. Every phase of life, however, which has in itself any intellectual or moral significance, will, when expressed by an artist, reflect either the artist's interpretation of that meaning, or his failure to interpret it.

Thus we round our circle. The *Ode to a Nightingale* is one of those creations of art, lacking in moral inspiration, teaching us nothing of how to live, which yet, as Balfour says, the world could ill afford to lose. It gives, let us say, the very greatest pleasure to some, but not to all; the difference in pleasure received being due to the varying associative value of the images for different readers; hence there could be no uniformity of opinion as to its value if that opinion were based upon the total amount of pleasure given. But the variable element in the pleasure is the pleasure of the sympathetic, not of expression. That is constant. The work, after all, whether it inspires some with more pleasure than others or not, inspires all who have knowledge to understand with the pleasure that comes from contemplating perfect expression. It is not at all in the same class with the "best-seller," which also gives the very greatest pleasure to many, less to some, and none at all to æsthetic critics. In the case of such a best-seller, pleasure is due to a representation of the sympathetic, or to the stimulation of jaded senses through novelty, which, when it ceases to be novel, ceases to please, because of lack of intrinsic merit. In connection with the Shakespearean tragedies we find also this varying emotional response due to the variability of the pleasure of the sympathetic; and likewise the permanent, unshifting element

of pleasure, due to the beauty of perfect expression. But we find in addition a positive moral and intellectual content; the perfect expression is of a vaster, more complex world, and reveals a more comprehensive mind. We are quite as much impressed by what is beautifully represented as by the beauty of the representation itself.

If it is true that a work of art may express the artist's moral interpretation of life, then surely the critic may criticize that interpretation and attach to art other values than its æsthetic beauty and the sympathetic pleasure which it inspires. In truth, the content of a work of art has everything to do with its value. To speak in this manner is not necessarily to undervalue beauty nor to rank ourselves with the disparagers of culture. It is to recognize that the beauty of a work of art is only one element in its total cultural value; that literature besides pleasing us may increase our knowledge, broaden our sympathies, deepen our insight into the spiritual truths of life, sustain and ennoble us. Literary critics may close their eyes to these facts, but the facts remain. Critics of Mr. Balfour's way of thinking believe that the critic has performed his whole function when he has pointed out the possible sources of pleasure. If the reader does not like it, let him leave it. But the critic who values literature because of its cultural qualities does not admit such limitation to his function. He knows that no matter how the function of literature itself may be limited theoretically, the fact remains that literature actually does affect the mind and morals as well as the sense of the reader. If beauty is the only direct result aimed at by the artist, the by-product turns out to be more important than the product itself. And the critic who has this in mind tries by his writing to bring the reader under the influence of these character-shaping elements which have given to literature its supreme value. Nor can it be justly said that such practice is extraneous to the function of criticism. Criticism is concerned with the whole of the work of art, with its value and influence, as well as with its meaning and its method of creation. A piece of criticism which points out the end which the author aimed at and the nature of the success which he achieved may be of great value in fostering a love of literature by making it understandable; but it still leaves something to be desired,

namely, an estimate of the value of the success itself. As a work of art to be great must first be expressive, the critic who insists upon the distinction between expressive and great, so long as he does not become so over-zealous as to lose sight of the distinction between expressive and non-expressive, which is fundamental, is in no wise false to his function.

I am inclined to think that much of the hostility manifested towards moral criticism is but a natural reaction against the narrow and rigid code of a few moral critics. The satirical controversies with which critics occasionally bring cheer to the hearts of all lovers of choice gossip are quite generally the outcome of loyalty to different codes of morality, not of hostility to moral criticism as such. The Americans and English are a righteous people, far more deeply concerned with what they regard as wrong opinion than with the causes that lead to the forming of such opinion. It is the old habit, noted by Matthew Arnold, of insisting upon strictness of conscience while neglecting spontaneity of consciousness. The attempt to limit literature—provided its artistic excellence, its expressiveness, be unquestioned—because of its possible immoral influence is about as dangerous as the attempt to limit science for the same reason. The question of morality is proper when the truth of the expression is involved. When Mr. Brownell said that the value of a work of art depends upon the artist's knowledge of life, he might have added with equal truth that the value of criticism of art depends upon the critic's knowledge of life. The critic as well as the artist may very well be open to the charge of not knowing enough. A brilliant critic with an inflexible moral standard may become extremely narrow-minded, and his moral judgments based on preconceptions may, through their retarding influence on the free play of thought, by which means alone truth is advanced, be positively more injurious than the judgment of the æsthetic critic who professedly is unconcerned with the moral values of a work of art. Obviously an artistic creation resulting from a view of life which the critic regards as narrow or false is open to hostile criticism, but just as obviously the critic's own vision may need attention. This, however, is a question of the individual critic's power of judgment, not of the legitimacy of judicial criticism.

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